

Section Title: Academic Policies
Policy Title: Off-Campus Instruction
Policy Number: A 1.4

Scope and Purpose

Pursuant to T.C.A. §49-7-202, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) is to review and approve or disapprove all proposals for off-campus locations at public institutions including universities, community colleges, and technology centers. The Commission grants the authority for review and approval to the Executive Director.

This policy fulfills the Commission's charge to develop policies and procedures for the purpose of reviewing and approving off-campus locations.

New Instructional Locations

- 1.4.10 **Locations Subject to Approval.** Proposals for off-campus centers and off-campus sites will be subject to review and approval under this policy. Proposal formats appropriate to the requested action are attached to this policy. They are:
- (1) proposal format for establishing a new off-campus center (Attachment A).
 - (2) operational costs proposal for establishing an off-campus center (Attachment B).
 - (3) proposal to extend a degree program to an existing off-campus center (Attachment C).
 - (4) site code form to request a site code (Attachment D).

Off-Campus Centers

- 1.4.20 An off-campus center must meet all of the following criteria to be approved:
1. There is a continuing administrative presence, as evidenced by at least one full-time or part-time administrator housed on-site, but with the institution's executive personnel housed on another campus.
 2. Courses are offered every semester and there is at least one academic program fully available on-site.
 3. The physical facility must be: (1) owned by the institution, (2) leased by the institution, (3) owned by another public institution of higher education, or (4) provided at no cost to the institution.
- 1.4.21 **Criteria for Review of Off-Campus Centers.** The criteria set forth in Provisions 1.4.21A – 1.4.21B.6 will provide the general

framework used in reviewing proposals for new off-campus centers.

- 1.4.21A **Early Consultation/Notification.** Upon consideration by an institution to develop a proposal for a new off-campus center, governing board staff must provide the Commission staff with a copy of the institution's Letter of Intent to develop an off-campus center proposal and a copy of the institution's Substantive Change Notification to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), where indicated by SACS procedures. The establishment of centers must be consistent with and reference the campus master plan and institutional mission.

Upon consultation with Commission staff and approval to proceed, governing board staff must share early versions of proposals with the Commission staff and provide the final proposal at least two weeks prior to notification of being placed on the agenda for consideration by the governing board.

- 1.4.21B **Proposal for a New Off-Campus Center.** The proposal, including cost estimations, must be presented in the format attached to this policy (Attachment A). The proposal must include the following items and be approved by the institution's governing board:

B.1. **Needs Assessment.** The proposal must include a sound justification of demonstrated need. The proposal must document community or industry support, descriptions of the target population, and the measurable benefits to the community from the proposed off-campus location.

B.2. **Operational Costs.** Documentation must be provided to the commission that details the estimated costs associated with the proposed center. Projected costs include but are not limited to items such as all leasing arrangements, square footage, utilities, instructional resources, faculty salaries, auxiliaries, and all other items deemed necessary by the Commission. Costs must be estimated for a minimum of five years. Preference will be given to donated or leased space rather than space that must be purchased by the institution. Operational costs must be presented in the format attached to this policy (Attachment B).

B.3. **Facilities.** Facilities planned or in place at the off-campus center should be appropriate for the enrollment and character of programs offered. In particular, facilities should meet the Standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and other applicable accrediting and regulating agencies. Whenever the establishment or upgrading of a center requires substantially new facilities, which may or may not include a land purchase, the community should be willing to provide the site, be willing to provide

access to all necessary utilities, highways, and access roads, and be willing to make a substantial contribution toward the initial planning and construction of the location. The leasing or acquisition of space or land is subject to approval by the THEC and the State Building Commission; and must comply with current State laws set forth in TCA 12-1-106, -107 or 12-2-114, -115, State Building Commission policy, and THEC policy numbers F4.1 and F4.2.

B.4. Administration. Plans for administration of the off-campus center should be appropriate for the enrollment and character of the academic programming offered. In particular, part-time employment of local personnel for registration does not meet the requirement of “continuing administrative presence.”

B.5. Academic Program. Evidence of a full academic program offered on-site must be provided. The information provided to THEC must include program name, degree level, and a projected calendar of course offerings for full-degree completion.

B.6. Projected Enrollments. Projected headcount enrollment and full-time equivalent (FTE) over a five-year period must be provided.

1.4.22 **Notification of Extension.** If an institution seeks to extend an academic program to an existing off-campus center, a notification of extension form (Attachment C) to the THEC is required. A course projection for the full degree program must be included on the notification form.

1.4.23 **Review of Off-Campus Centers.** THEC will monitor center enrollments annually to determine that enrollments are continuous and to identify any potentially low-enrollment centers. The THEC will conduct a comprehensive review of all off-campus centers every five years. The review will report headcount and FTE enrollment by off-campus center over five academic years. Centers will also be required to document the offering of a full academic program, administrative presence, and actual costs.

1.4.24 **Phase-Out and Closing of Off-Campus Centers.** THEC staff may recommend that governing boards phase out and close off-campus centers that do not have a continuous enrollment over the five year period, a continuing administrative presence, courses offered every academic term, and a full academic program offered on site. Governing boards and institutions will have an opportunity to provide a justification for the absence of any requirements and have an option for the center to remain active until the next review period. If the center is phased out, the center’s location code will remain in the THEC database but will not be eligible for reactivation.

Off-Campus Site

- 1.4.30 An off-campus site is a physical space that is generally being used for *credit enrollment only*. The THEC will issue site codes for sites offering credit courses; site codes are not needed for continuing education enrollment. The following are examples of typical offerings at off-campus sites: dual enrollment course offerings; workforce development opportunities; and short-term, specific instructional needs.
- 1.4.31 **Criteria for Review of Off-Campus Sites.** The criteria set in Provisions 1.4.31A – 1.4.31F will provide the general framework used in reviewing proposals for new off-campus sites. The site code request form is Attachment D.
- 1.4.31A **Relevance to Institutional Mission.** The instructional activity of all off-campus locations should be relevant to the role and scope of the institution as set forth in its mission statement.
- 1.4.31B **Unnecessary Duplication.** The Commission will not approve the establishment or upgrading of a site if the proposed delivery of instructional services could reasonably occur through existing institutions, centers, or other off-campus sites. The Commission shall not approve any additional off-campus sites at the university level in which the instructional activity duplicates that offered at the community college level, unless agreed upon by the community college and the university.
- 1.4.31C **Service Area.** If a proposed new off-campus site is in the service area of another institution, then the impacted institutions must meet to coordinate off-campus offerings. Prior to contracting with impacted client groups, an institution contemplating the creation of new off-campus offerings within the service area of another institution shall communicate its proposal to the impacted institution in writing. The institution receiving the proposal has the right of first refusal, and should respond to the proposal within 30 days of the receipt of the proposal notification. Disagreements must be resolved between institutions, with input as needed from governing board staff, before the proposal can move forward to the Commission. The governing board will document agreements between institutions when the request is submitted to the Commission. If the impacted institution cannot, or will not, deliver the requested instruction, the requesting institution may request an appeal of the denial decision to the THEC Executive Director. On-line offerings are not impacted by 1.4.31C.

- 1.4.31D **Justification of Need.** The proposal must include a firm justification of demonstrated need. The proposal must include a detailed overview of community and employer support, projected demand, and external financial support for the site as applicable.
- 1.4.31E **Operational Costs.** Documentation must be provided to the Commission that details the estimated costs associated with the proposal. Proposed costs include but are not limited to items such as all leasing arrangements, square footage, utilities, instructional resources, faculty salaries, auxiliaries, and all other items deemed necessary by the Commission. Costs must be estimated for at least one semester if the instructional commitment is of a short-term nature. Institutional commitments past the one semester threshold must be estimated for a minimum of one calendar year. Primary consideration will be given to donated or leased space rather than space that must be purchased by the institution.
- 1.4.31F **Projected Enrollment.** Projected headcount enrollment for the first semester must be provided.
- 1.4.32 **Review of Off-Campus Sites.** THEC will monitor enrollments at off-campus sites annually. Off-campus sites will be required to have enrollment in at least one academic semester over the five year period.
- 1.4.33 **Phase-Out and closing of Off-Campus Sites.** THEC staff may recommend phasing-out and closing off-campus sites that do not show enrollments at least one semester during a five year period. Governing boards and institutions will have an opportunity to provide a justification for the lack of enrollment and request that the site remain active until the next review period. If the site is phased-out, the site's location code will remain in the THEC database and can be reactivated upon the institution's request.

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